

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, while we debate today's latest House Republican economic stimulus proposal, I would like to once again speak up on behalf of my home district of Guam and the U.S. territories, all of which have been experiencing double digit unemployment rates and have seen a down-turn in our tourism-dependent economies.

I am grateful for the assistance of Representative JOHN BOEHNER, Chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, for ensuring that the territories are eligible under the National Emergency Grants provision of the Republican stimulus bill. However, I was hoping that the Government of Guam would be provided economic relief for individual tax rebates and to see increases for Medicaid funding that we have sought, and that were included in Democratic proposals.

The bill before us today does nothing for the territories, especially for Guam. In fact, it may hurt. It provides more tax cuts which are reflected in Guam through a "mirror tax code." This has the effect of reducing local revenues at a time when Government of Guam leaders are exploring the possibility of cutting worker salaries by 10 percent. It ignores our plight because we are not included in the additional 13 weeks of unemployment insurance. We should assist people who truly need help and local governments who are suffering through the most difficult times in the nation.

After all is said or done between the various competing proposals, however, it is clear to me that the territories will not be provided with the economic relief necessary, and that a targeted insular areas economic relief package is direly needed. Unlike the rest of the country, we in the territories have been struggling economically for the last few years. Prior to the September 11 attacks, Guam's economy, alone, was already struggling as a result of the Asian economic crisis. For the last 3 years, Guam's unemployment rate has averaged over 15 percent. This rate is three times the national average.

Over the last several months, I have been in discussion with other territorial delegates, Administration officials, Congressional leaders from the Ways and Means and Resources Committees, and local political and business leaders in the territories, on the need for an insular areas economic relief package.

Legislative items which should be considered include:

Increasing the waiver of local matching requirements for the territories;

Ensuring that the territories are included in the National Emergency Grants Program;

Lifting the cap on Medicaid funding for the territories or increasing the level of Medicaid funding;

Establishing empowerment zones in the territories;

Extending the supplement grant for population increases and contingency fund for welfare programs to the territories;

Providing unemployment assistance to the smaller territories from FEMA's Disaster Unemployment Assistance Program;

Extending supplemental security income benefits to Guam and the Virgin Islands;

Providing Federal guaranteed bonds for infrastructure projects in the territories; and

Generating increased GovGuam revenues with military personnel on temporary duty on Guam.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on ways to provide economic relief to the U.S. territories.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I think today's action on the House floor is exactly the kind of thing that makes people cynical about Congress and the political process.

As our businesses are struggling to recover from recession, unemployment insurance is running out for thousands of people who have lost their jobs. Extending those benefits is something they need and something that will help the economy because it will enable them to continue paying their bills.

Those are the facts. There should be no partisan disagreement about them—which is why the Senate unanimously approved the bill before us, which would extend those benefits for 13 weeks.

And there should be no disagreement about what we should be doing today as we prepare to adjourn and leave town for more than a week. We should be passing that bill—the bill supported by every Senator, regardless of party—and sending it to the President so he can sign it into law.

But we aren't doing that. Instead, the Republicans leadership is insisting on holding that bill hostage—which means holding hostage everyone who need the extension of unemployment coverage—by sending it back to the Senate loaded down with a bulging grab bag of other legislation that the House has already passed before.

No wonder people are cynical about Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that none of the things in this legislative package is any good. As a matter of fact, there are a number of items that I support. For example, I strongly support the extension of the clean-energy production credits and the work-opportunity credit. I also support a number of provisions to give tax relief to small businesses and to shorten the period for depreciating leasehold improvements. And I definitely think we need to change the way the alternative minimum tax is applied to individuals.

But all those provisions were already included in legislation that the House passed last year. There is no need to hijack this bill—a bill to provide urgently-needed help to thousands of Americans—to get them to the Senate, because they are already there.

I understand that the Republican leadership here in the House wants the Senate to act on a stimulus bill—and I agree that a sound stimulus bill would be good for the economy and good for the country. But I cannot agree to their strategy. I cannot agree to holding hard-pressed Americans hostage to try to coerce our colleagues in the other body. So, I cannot support this motion.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this economic stimulus package. In particular, I'd like to highlight the part of this bill that addresses the needs of working Americans and their families.

I'd also like to thank SAM JOHNSON of Texas and BUCK MCKEON of California, who helped craft the National Emergency Grant provisions, which we originally introduced as part of the "Back-to-Work Act" to respond to the needs of displaced workers.

As everyone knows, the September 11 terrorist attacks precipitated a downturn in our economy, and thousands of workers are now jobless. The proposal before us will help every worker return to work as quickly as possible—and in the meantime, that they and their families have access to quality health insurance as

well as employment and job training resources.

Last year, the Labor Department acted decisively to mobilize the existing safety net for displaced workers and their families. And Secretary Elaine Chao testified before my committee on how Congress can work with the Administration to further strengthen the safety net for these workers—which is what this worker relief package would do.

As Secretary Chao said, and I quote, "This Administration is committed to going even further than current programs allow to help families, industries and regions that have been hardest-hit by the terrorist attacks and their aftermath. Workers need help regardless of what industry they work in—not just a chosen few. The President's plan gets money to wherever people are hurting."

The proposal before us is one that can be implemented quickly, flexibly, and without creating new bureaucracy. It's designed to do three things: (1) help those who have lost their jobs because of the economic downturn; (2) put people back to work to help get the economy moving again; and (3) ensure that displaced workers have access to health care.

Specifically, this bill would expand the National Emergency Grant program and authorize and appropriate \$3.9 billion to help dislocated workers. Under the bill, grants may be used by states to help ensure that dislocated workers: (1) maintain health insurance coverage; (2) receive some form of income support during the recovery period; and (3) return to work as quickly as possible with the help of employment training and job search assistance.

Mr. Speaker, this proposal is a compassionate one—not just because it provides workers in need with flexibility and resources, but because it recognizes that a displaced worker's true goal, ultimately, is to return to work. A government program can help a worker survive. But until a worker returns to work, no economic recovery is complete.

On behalf of our nation's workers, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this economic stimulus package.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, today, the House of Representatives will vote on another stimulus package that comes closer to the immediate needs of the country. We are all facing a sagging economy, escalating unemployment levels, and close to my home on Long Island, our concerns also include reconstruction efforts. Although this bill does not include everything I would have preferred, it is an improvement from the previous versions I opposed.

Although I support the provision extending unemployment benefits for an additional 13 weeks, this bill neglects the immediate unemployed health insurance needs of displaced workers. This bill provides a temporary tax credit equal to 60 percent of the cost of health insurance purchased by unemployed workers. This is a step in the right direction, but displaced workers need health insurance assistance now; not when they file their taxes next year.

New York is in dire straights because of the September 11 attacks. The sudden spike in unemployment levels has placed an enormous strain on unemployment rolls and other assistance programs. I was pleased the bill included \$3.9 billion in national emergency grants to states for health care and reemployment assistance for displaced workers, as well as an